



A GUIDE TO BOTTLE FEEDING

(This is only a guide. If you feel a puppy or kitten is struggling please call us or contact a vet)

Welcome to one of the most rewarding and special foster experiences and thank you for volunteering to undertake the task! Hand rearing is time-consuming, tiring, messy and can be very frustrating. But if you are prepared for that, it is also one of the most rewarding jobs a foster carer can have. We are here to support you with any questions or hiccups you may have and we have put together this basic guide to help you in the meantime.

Equipment you will need :

- Baby Bottles
- Puppy/kitten milk
- Cotton wool
- Carrier or high-sided box
- Towels and blankets
- Baby wipes (preferably unscented)

We will provide the milk or reimburse you if you need to collect some from the vets. Cows milk is extremely bad for pups and kittens and should never be used to feed them. Goats milk which can be bought in local supermarkets or special puppy formula should be used. Cows milk can cause diarrhoea and result in the puppy becoming dehydrated very quickly.

How do I feed my puppy?

Ideally, you will have more than one puppy. We try to keep hand-rears in pairs or more so they can grow and interact together. More than one pup also means they can use each others body heat for warmth and feel more secure than if they were on their own. The first 3 days of life are the most critical for a pups survival. Pups will need to be fed every 2-3 hours for the first two weeks, including at night.



Different brands of milk will have different instructions on how to prepare the milk. Follow the instructions on ratios of powder to water. The water must be boiled to sterilise and reduce the chance of bacterial infection. Never use hot water straight from a tap. The milk must always be cooled to at least skin temperature or slightly warmer. Warm milk aids the pups digestion and also helps to keep their core body temperature up.

The milk should not flow out of the teat when the bottle is held upside down. It should drip slowly so as not to choke the puppy.

Once the milk is at a drinkable temperature for your pup, the easiest way to feed is to place the puppy on a towel on your lap. Hold the puppy on its stomach and present the teat straight out in front of them. They should be able to smell the milk and "snuffle" for it before latching on. If a pup is having difficulty finding the teat or fully latch on, try offering your finger so they begin suckling on it. Hold the teat near your finger as they suckle and then transfer quickly.

Never feed the pup on its back, especially under the age of 3 weeks as the milk could enter the pups lungs and cause pneumonia or choking. Pup should not have to over-extend their head in order to reach the teat as this can cause difficulty breathing while feeding.

If a pup seems to want the milk but is having trouble feeding part way through, try winding the pup by rubbing their back and gently patting. They may just have trapped wind that they need help with! The opening in the teat of the bottle is a slit rather than a hole and so sometimes the

bottle may just need turning slightly and the teat adjusting in order to allow the milk through.

After feeding, sterilise the bottle and teat ready for the next feed.

Then comes the messy part....



When puppies and kittens are with their mum, it is the mums job to ensure her babies are urinating and defecating. Their mum does this by stimulating their genitals with her tongue. It is therefore our job to do this in the absence of mum but don't worry! We don't recommend you use your tongue! This is where the cotton wool and baby wipes come in handy.

Damp cotton wool with warm water and squeeze out any excess water. Holding the pup over a bowl or whilst still on your lap on a towel, use the cotton wool to gently stimulate their genitals to encourage them to pee and poop. Pups will need to toilet after every feed. It is important that we do this so that they don't become constipated or too full to feed. If pup has got into a bit of a mess, clean them up using the baby wipes and make sure their bellies are dry to reduce the chances of them getting cold. You can use the baby wipes to give them an all over clean but remember to keep them warm whilst doing this.

Around 2 weeks, they will begin to toilet by themselves but we must still do this after each feed to ensure they toileting completely. If they toilet in the bed whilst asleep, other pups may accidentally consume the faeces which can cause illness in the litter. Pups also tend to suckle on each other whilst sleeping and may end up with a belly full of urine rather than milk! A happy pup is put to bed toileted, clean, warm and with a full stomach from feeding.

Remember to wash your hands both before and after feeding to avoid cross contamination.

Keeping Puppy Warm

If a puppy or kitten is crying excessively, even after feeding and toileting, check their temperature. A cold puppy will have more trouble feeding and digesting their food and will become weak and lethargic quickly. Placing a pup down your top under your clothes or holding them on your belly with skin contact can bring their temperature back up to an acceptable level. Pups need to be kept warm at all times - at this age, they are very vulnerable to hypothermia and can lead to a fading puppy. For the first 14 days, they do not have a shiver reflex. It is down to us to regulate their body temperature. Placing a teddy or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel in their carrier gives them something to snuggle up to and also keep warm.

If travelling with your pup please take a covered hot water bottle (Be sure the water in the bottle is warm, not hot) and take extra blankets in case one becomes wet or dirty. In an emergency and where you are unable to use your own body heat to keep a pup warm, please use an item of your own clothing. A tiny pup will fit quite nicely in a sock for instance.

Things to look out for

Semi-solids can be introduced at around 3-4 weeks. At around 2 weeks of age, the pups should be alert and trying to stand on their own. By 3 weeks, they will likely try to climb out of anything they are in and by 4 weeks, they should be walking, running and playing.

Eyes will open between 10-14 days. If by 16-18 days they haven't opened, or there is discharge from the still closed eyes, we should be informed and the pups should see a vet for advice.

The milk formula should have a guide on how much a pup should be feeding over the space of 24 hours. Generally, you are looking at around 15-25ml per 100gms body weight depending on the dogs breed or guess-timated adult weight. If a pup is feeding and milk begins coming out their nose, this is generally a sign that they are full and the milk has nowhere to go! Even if a pup still wants the bottle, stop feeding. They could end up choking themselves.

If a pup seems lethargic, doesn't want to feed, is crying constantly or just seems generally weak, contact us as soon as possible and let us know. Be aware that sometimes we can only do so much and a fading puppy does not mean you have done anything wrong or have "failed". If a pup hasn't had that chance to have its first feed from mum containing her anti bodies, his chances of survival are very slim, no matter how hard we work. We know how devastating it can be to lose a puppy you have bonded so closely with and we will support you - rest assured you will never be blamed or have it held against you. Even our most experienced hand-rearers have lost puppies. This is a risk we take by volunteering to undertake this task so please be aware that it can happen but don't let it put you off. To see a pup that you have hand-reared grow up and leave for their new home and family is genuinely one of the most heart warming and emotional experiences in the world of dog rescue and quite often, adopters will want to keep in touch with their pups "human parent" and let you know how they are doing every now and then. Remember - they wouldn't have their puppy if it wasn't for you, so feel proud!!

